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AN ESTIMATE OF CURRENT FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY

The present crisis in French-Allied relations over the control of civil affairs in liberated France invites inquiry into official French attitudes concerning foreign affairs. Debates held in the Consultative Assembly at Algiers on this subject approximately three weeks before the invasion reflect the opinion of the Assembly at that time and appear still to constitute a reliable guide to the attitudes upon which French policy has been based.

On 12 and 15 May 1944 the Consultative Assembly devoted its sessions to a debate on foreign affairs. During the debates, attended throughout by de Gaulle, the Assembly steadily pressed the regime to undertake a more "dynamic" policy, for the purpose of speedily concluding negotiations with the Allies and of obtaining the security of France both through French participation in the negotiations for the prospective armistice and in the post-war organization of Europe. As a mark of the stronger position on which it insisted, the Assembly concluded its proceedings with a unanimous vote that the Committee of National Liberation adopt the title of Provisional Government.

The principal object of criticism in the Assembly's debates was less immediately the policy than the personnel of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. While not himself charged with any greater fault than weakness, Massigli has long been criticized for failing to replace, both in Algiers and abroad, career diplomats who were either actually associated with Vichy or who have shown themselves hostile to democratic and resistance groups. In defense, government spokesmen have noted the extreme shortage of experienced personnel from whom to choose. Massigli apparently has been unable to find even a competent undersecretary, and he has been obliged to group together the former regional sections of foreign affairs into a few major divisions because of the same shortage of staff.

The presence of this back-log of career personnel who constitute an important reservoir for filling foreign-service posts has had a fundamentally conservative influence on policy. While some of the career diplomats have been tainted with the Vichy collaboration, they are believed to share the primary national concern over preventing a repetition of German aggression. They diverge, however, from the prevalent attitude in the Assembly on social and economic questions, where the diplomats in general share the view of conservative financial interests. These interests, unlike the majority in the Assembly, have been committed to a state policy of *laissez-faire* permitting private international cartels to flourish.

On the question of relations with the USSR, at least some of this diplomatic personnel are anxious to avoid too close association with the Soviet Union and are alarmed by the prospect of Soviet domination of the European continent. While sensitive about French prestige, they are essentially moderate in their nationalism; on the question of relations with the Allies they regret the lack of a formula granting larger recognition to the French National Committee, but are not disposed to press the issue—in part because of their desire to associate themselves with a western bloc in order to counter-balance if not oppose the Soviet Union. Such a policy, in their view, would preserve France from internal Communism and at the same time strengthen the international position of the nation as leader of a European bloc.

Massigli himself, though a career diplomat, stands apart from these elements. At the Quai d'Orsay he was an insistent member of the minority who from the beginning opposed the appeasement policy of Munich. Massigli is probably more convinced than some members of the French foreign service of the necessity of accord with the Soviet Union. On the other hand, he agrees with his subordinates in distrust of strong nationalism—a point of view perhaps confirmed by long connection with the work of the League of Nations. He is also unwilling to adopt a stiff attitude toward Britain and the United States because of the desire to maintain warm French relations with the West as well as the USSR.

It was this essentially moderate policy that Massigli presented in opening the debate in the Consultative Assembly on 12 May. As spokesman for the Committee at a critical point in its history, Massigli was in a delicate position; anticipation of the invasion created an atmosphere of tension, particularly because of the recent cancellation of code communication privileges between Algiers and London and because of the lack of a French civil affairs agreement with the Allies. Massigli pointed out that in spite of these difficulties some progress had been made: French participation in Allied technical conferences and the extent of recognition granted by the USSR and Canada were cited as examples. The Commissioner of Foreign Affairs expressed expansive hopes in discussing France's future position in Europe. Allied relations with Italy would not be considered satisfactory until the royal government had "formally repudiated the crime of 1940." It would be "inconceivable" that France would not be consulted on the Armistice terms to be presented to Germany. In determining that country's fate, the French Government would of necessity play a large part as spokesman for the peoples that had suffered from German occupation and repression. France would likewise expect to assume a special position of leadership toward the smaller democracies of western Europe. In a future international organization, France would feel entitled to a place among the directing powers.

The debate which followed indicated substantial agreement among the Assembly's members with the position outlined by Massigli. However, there were expressions during the discussion which revealed the

opinion that he had not been sufficiently vigorous in prosecuting his avowed policy. The most frequently recurring criticisms were directed at the personnel of the Foreign Commissariat. Senator Cuttoli, Radical Socialist from the Department of Constantine, led the attack, insisting that the French diplomatic service must be entirely remade if it is to serve the interests of the Republic; in his view, the Quai d'Orsay had demonstrated too well that it had been penetrated with the prejudices of a cast hostile to democracy. Declaring that he was "not a fanatic in regard to *"épuration"*, Cuttoli demanded that the diplomatic service be cleansed of men who have taken an attitude of distrust if not hostility toward resistance organizations. These criticisms were endorsed by Francis Perrin, newly arrived member from the United States. Mme. Simard, delegate from Canada, asked that the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs not to send to Canada representatives who, whatever their career qualifications, were "too late in discovering the truth." P. O. Lapie, sitting on the Right, criticized the failure to find men of high calibre to represent France at Washington, Moscow, and Cairo. Finally, Louis Vallon, speaking for the resistance Socialists, called for a reformation of France's diplomatic representation, praising the recent choice of Paul Rivet as French cultural ambassador to Latin America. In response, Massigli stated that important elements of the Foreign Services had taken their stand against Vichy, that steps of *"épuration"* were in process against others, and that recruitment in Algiers was open to men not in the career diplomatic service.

It was clear that the Assembly approved Massigli's assertion that "the myth of the Great Powers is the obstacle to tomorrow's peace"—indicating the fear that France would be subordinated to Britain, America, and the Soviet Union. Again there were expressions of impatience that the Committee had not taken more active measures in pursuit of its policy of strengthening France's position in post-war Europe. Professor Cassin and Vincent Auriol implied that there should already be western parellels to the Soviet-Czech treaty with France taking the leading role. Auriol reaffirmed the traditional Socialist faith in collective security. The sympathetic hearing he received indicated that even among the more conservative delegates the conviction was general that in the present weakened position of France her salvation lay in a system of mutual aid agreements — a soberer position replacing the intransigent and over-charged nationalism earlier espoused by some French abroad.

These commentaries of the delegates found clear expression in the Assembly's concluding motion calling on the Committee to assume the title of Provisional Government; the proposal had been made by the Resistance and the underground *Confédération Générale du Travail* in France; it was presented by Gazier and adopted unanimously. This event reportedly caused little comment in Algiers, being considered there as merely the official announcement of a long-existing *de facto* status. Assumption of the new title was regarded as an essential preliminary to the exercise of administrative functions on the liberation of France. It was intended that the Government should effectively press the Allies

for such powers in the metropole. The Committee later made clear that in any event the fundamental ordinance of 21 April 1944 concerning the reestablishment of public powers in France remained unaltered.

General de Gaulle entered the debate three times during the two days of discussion in the Assembly. His statements were reportedly characterized by plainness and restraint. In a concluding speech, De Gaulle pointed out that for a long time after June 1940 the Allies had had reason to doubt the good intentions of the French nation. Even now, he explained, "we are not in a situation analogous to that which we occupied at the time of the treaty of Westphalia, the treaty of Paris, or even of the treaty of Versailles"; the debate, he declared, had necessarily been "a bit melancholy." As on a previous occasion, by drawing attention to the part played by French troops in the renewed offensive in Italy, he indicated his conviction that no diplomatic misunderstandings could undermine the solid military cooperation of France with her allies.

The 12 and 15 May debate of the Consultative Assembly on foreign affairs thus provide what was essentially a vote of confidence in the French National Committee, accompanied by exhortation to act with greater vigor in pursuing its foreign policy. In answer, the Committee has adopted the title of Provisional Government as voted in the Assembly, has continued to press the Allies for a favorable settlement of the French civil affairs problem, and has sought to improve the international position of France in fostering close relations with the governments particularly of the small European nations.